

Utilizing Local Food Product at Rural Destination

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Abstract

Local food is considered as a symbol of culture destination and its people. Consuming local food is one of the memorial activities by tourists during the holiday seasons apart from fulfilling the basic needs and demands in rural destination. By participating in local food activities, it gives the opportunity to identify closely different culture and identity of a rural destination. Local food in rural destination does not only satisfy hunger, but also provides a major component of intangible heritage and becomes increasingly important attraction for tourists. Current research has found that local food at the rural destination helps to promote destination awareness, form destination identity, create tourist activity, and contribute to tourist satisfaction and experience. Thus, local food can be used as a tool to develop economies in rural destination. In tourism aspects, rural destinations tend to sell common attributes such as nature, historical sites, landscape, and cultural heritage. Integrating local food in rural destination may help to strengthen a tourist destination identity and competitiveness. Therefore, this conceptual paper provides the understanding of utilizing local food product for rural destination development domestically and globally.

Keywords: Local Food, Food Tourism, Rural Destination, Destination Development, Benefit Of Local Food.

Introduction

Tourism plays an important role in creating more jobs (World Tourism Organization, 2016) and helps to increase the economic benefits on the rural communities (Jaafar, Kayat, Tangit, & Yacob, 2013). According to Frederick (1993), destination with specific advantages such as mountains, heritage sites, and other natural attractions such as beautiful scenery, fresh air, and pleasant climate serve as free resources of economic value for economic development. Rural destination is rich with natural resources interest, which possibly will give competitive advantages to the destination (Haven-tang & Jones, 2005) as compared to other tourism

destinations. The potential area needs to be exploited in order to create its own strength and to increase its competitiveness, thus can generate more income (Porter, 2003).

Ideally, in many destinations, rural tourism has been connected with farm tourism (Oppermann, 1996) or agro-tourism (Sharpley, 2002), heritage sites, and national parks. Different places have different practices and activities especially in rural destination. Each rural destination has its own unique attractions and advantages that are beneficial to the host community (Jaafar et al., 2013). Local culture activities and practices in the natural destination should be protected by conservation and preservation. Thus, highlighting the different and core product that is locally produced would help in creating more tourism product activity in a particular place (Samuel Folorunso Adeyinka-Ojo & Khoo-Lattimore, 2013). In order to differentiate one destination from another, Beerli and Martin (2004) has developed nine destination attractions attributes in determining the perceived destination image. Amongst the listed destination attractions attributes are food and culture. Regardless whether food is the tourist's main attraction, it is accepted that food provides an enjoyment and memorable experience for the tourists (Sánchez-Cañizares & López-Guzmán, 2012). Moreover, according to Long (2004) food is one of the key elements for one to decide a destination. This paper emphasizes the utilization of local food in order to develop rural destination domestically and globally.

Literature Review

In food tourism literatures, the terms 'local food', 'local cuisine', 'regional food', or 'ethnic foods' have been used interchangeably (Montanari & Staniscia, 2009) to explain the meaning of food that is grown and produced locally without adding any imported ingredients (Nummedal & Hall, 2006). The role of food in destination is not only being a basic needs for tourist, but is an essential element for understanding and learning more about the regional culture and identity that adds extra value to the image of a destination (López-Guzmán & Sánchez-Cañizares, 2012). Local food represent a symbol of destination's tangible heritage and through its consumption, tourists can gain a truly authentic cultural experience (Okumus, Okumus, & McKercher, 2007). Highlighting local food as part of destination image may help to strengthen destination local culture identity and competitiveness.

Local food can be considered as part of distinctive destination, which reflects local culture and identity in many countries. For instance, the unique foods of France, Spain, and Italy are well known globally and have significantly attracted many visitors. López-Guzmán and Sánchez-Cañizares (2012) examined sampling of local food and found that it was either primary or secondary motivator among the tourists who visited Cordoba in Spain. Their study revealed that majority of the tourists agreed that local food is one of most important reason to travel to Cordoba. This result added to the past literature conducted by Enright and Newton (2005) who examined local food was found as the second motivation of tourists for visiting Hong Kong, fourth motivation to visit Bangkok, and fifth motivation to visit Singapore.

Many countries have started to showcase the range of distinctive foods that are available in order to create what might be called 'local taste'. This strategy is useful for rural destination since it can be added value to the destination for example, as a cultural base activity. Incorporating local food activities into tourism existing packages can enhance destination awareness, diversify experience, and encourage tourist-spend (Jalis, Che, & Markwell, 2014) particularly in rural area. It also gives positive economy impact to the destination development and increasing community social wellbeing. Table 1 below shows the list of examples of past studies that are related to the benefits of local food in rural tourism destination.

Table 1 : Summary of findings from reviewed articles

Author(s)	Tourist Destinations	Sample characteristic	Data Collection	Data analysis	Findings
Adeyinka-Ojo and Khoo-Lattimore (2016)	Bario in Sarawak, Malaysia (A local Village)	Tourists + local residents + agriculture investors + government agencies and marketing and branding experts	Qualitative (Interview + participant observation)	Thematic data analysis- transcribed and coded	This study found that regional food and food event at Bario in Sarawak, Malaysia has potentially help market the rural tourism destination. The finding also revealed that the slow food event has potential in developing the rural destination with the cooperation between local community, tourism organization and other tourism stakeholder.
Pratt (2013)	North East of Fiji Island	Tourists	Qualitative (Participant observation + field notes) Quantitative (Online Survey + open ended question)	-	Producing more foods locally in Fiji Island has minimized food miles, help in increasing local economy and highlighting the cultural aspect of preserving the quality food tradition.
Hjalager	Danish	Algiculture	Quantitative	Correlation	The development of

and Johansen (2013)	National Park (Mols Bjerge and Skjern Aadal), Denmark	association + tourist boards + municipal bodies + NGOs	(Online Survey)		food production at protected area represents economic sustainability of food producer and food provider and at the same time enhances the demand of service quality and adds more exciting experience for the visitors.
Everett and Slocum, (2013)	United Kingdom	Tourism consultants+ food festival organizers + local government officers + nonprofit organizations	Qualitative (Interview)	Thematic data analysis- transcribed and coded	Promoting and selling local food products to tourists help to support the important sustainability agendas that have been endorse by UK government bodies which are traditional industries, job development, rural economies, encouraging social justice and diversifying agriculture. The study also found that issues pertaining to the social capital were particularly fundamental in helping realize agricultural and tourism objectives.
Sims (2009)	National Park : Lake District and Exmoor ,	Tourist + food producers	Qualitative (Interview)	-	Promoting of unique local food products can help to create an 'image' of the

	United Kingdom					destination particularly to the new tourists. The image of local food products can be linked to traditional landscapes and farming method that tourists will experience during their holiday.
Skuras, Dimara, and Petrou (2006)	Two Mountains region in Greece	Visitors	Quantitative (Survey – Structured questionnaire)	Descriptive statistic		Tourists spending on local food products increase the size of expenditure that have positive impact on exports thus increase multiplier effects on regional income.
Telfer and Wall (1996)	Island of Lombok, Indonesia	Local food supplier	Qualitative (Participant observation)	-		Established linkage between tourism industry and local food production will benefit both sides in order to produce high quality local food products that delivered on time. At the same time, the tourism industry will create a positive image to the local community.

Destination must realize the important of local food in the tourism offer and their contribution to unique visitation experiences as well as the local economy (Haven-tang & Jones, 2005). This is associated with today's increasing number of tourists travelling for the reason of gastronomy and according to Okumus et al., (2007), we can identify a symbiotic relationship between the style of cooking and the destination as cuisines are usually associated by the origin countries

such as Chinese, India, Italian, Turkish, Mexican, and others. The success of utilizing local food as tourists' attraction has inspired other developing countries such as Thailand, Indonesia, Vietnam, and Malaysia to highlight the range of distinctive food in promoting their local food as part of their tourism products.

Essentially, the advantage in consuming more local food is that it helps to preserve small-scale farmland in rural areas as the money spent remains among the community. It also minimizes the distance of food being transported from farm or factory to the consumers or 'food miles'. Reducing the 'food miles' help cutting down fuel consumption, energy use, and traffic congestion (Pratt, 2013). In return, it also benefits the buyers who are participated in local food activity when on holiday. Tourists can obtain better understanding of the 'story behind the food' by talking to the people who grew or prepared the food (Brain, 2012). Connecting consumers with the people and place that offer the food will enhance the stronger sense of place, trust, and pride as well as building a positive relationship within the community. Thus, this results benefit both host community and tourists (Sims, 2009).

As the demand of local food increased, it is an opportunity for destination marketers and service providers to explore the potential value of utilizing local food in promoting rural destination in order to provide uniqueness experience to the tourists. This example can be found in a case study conducted by Samuel Folorunso Adeyinka-Ojo Catheryn Khoo-Lattimore (2013) at Bario, Sarawak. This study revealed that, foreign tourists decided to join the event because they wanted to experience the unique local culture through slow food event. The same study reported a group of foreign tourists who came for jungle trekking rearrange their schedule itinerary because of the slow food event at Bario. Local produce such as traditional food prepared by local people can provide attractive experience to the tourist and encouraging more tourists to visit the destination (Sims, 2009). According to Hall, Sharples, Mitchell, Macionis and Cambourne (2008), tourists are more motivated to stay longer at a destination because of the availability local food products and other related activities. This enables rural area to utilize on their natural resources to market rural location as a tourist destination that will increase tourist spending.

Conclusion

It can be seen from the literature review that there are more benefits of using local food for promotional activities at many destination including rural destination. Integrating local food in rural destination holds much potential to enhance tourism development contributing to the authenticity of a destination, strengthen the local economy, provide environmentally friendly infrastructure, enhancing visitor experience through food activities, strengthening the regional identity, and stimulating growth in other sectors. It also directly provides information specifically for local food providers who are targeting foreigners as a target market to experience and appreciate the taste of local food specifically in rural destination. In order for rural destination to sustain in the domestic and global industry as a tourists' destination preference, it is essential for policy makers, tourism bodies, government as well as other

related sectors to cooperate and assist each other in developing strategies for tourism development of the country. Promoting local food products at rural destination is viewed as important element to generate demand by tourists for locally grown products. Local food products at rural destination are seen as a symbol, a sign of communication as well as a class marker to both tourists and local communities.

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